First Meeting: LANGUAGE - 28 September 1978

I. Present: O. Andriewsky, A. R. DeLuca, J. Elbaum, G. Grabowicz, I. Hay, O. Ilnytzkyj, E. Kasinec, E. Keenan, R. Koropeckyj, R. Mathiesen, V. Nadraga, V. Ostapchuk, R. Picchio, O. Pritsak, O. Putro, N. Pylypiuk, O. Ronen, K. Rosenberg, J. B. Rudnyckyj, B. Struminsky, F. Sysyn, J. Szövérffy, M. Tarnawsky.

II. Speaker: Professor Robert Mathiesen, Brown University, on "Church Slavonic Literature as a System."

III. Report:

Does a literature, taken as a whole at a particular point in its history, have a system or structure, and if so, what is the nature of that system? Does there exist a Church Slavonic literature, and if so, what is its relation to the individual Slavic literatures (e.g., Ukrainian)? Recent scholarship has justified an affirmative answer to the first part of each question, but the second part of each remains largely unexplored.

A term such as "Ukrainian literature" is inherently ambiguous: it may refer either to the literature of a particular Slavic people or to the literature in a particular Slavic language--evidently two somewhat different things. The term "Church Slavonic literature," however, is free of this ambiguity because it can refer only to literature in the Church Slavonic language. If one takes a term such as "Ukrainian literature" in the linguistic sense, there is almost no overlap between it and Church Slavonic literature: the two literatures simply exist side-by-side in cultural time and space. If, however, one takes a term such as "Ukrainian literature" in the ethnic or national sense, then the several literatures of the Orthodox Slavs (as well as those of some Catholic Slavs and some non-Slavic Orthodox) all have--or have had--Church Slavonic literature as one of their components. They share this component much as the national literatures of Western Europe all share classical literature as a component.

Although in modern times Church Slavonic literature has become a vanishingly small part of the Slavic national literatures, during the Middle Ages it was their central and dominant component, not only in the number and extent of its texts, but also in the frequency with which its texts were presented to the reading (or rather, listening) public. Thus Church Slavonic literature could and did impose its system on the ethnic or national literatures of many Slavs during the Middle Ages, and the system of these medieval Slavic literatures cannot be understood unless one has first grasped the system of Church Slavonic literature.

The system of Church Slavonic literature happens to be well defined and easy to ascertain, and it turns out to be fundamentally different from the kinds of systems found in modern European (including Slavic) literatures since the Renaissance. It is based not on the forms, devices, and techniques of verbal artistry, as are the systems of post-Renaissance European literatures, but rather on the functions which Church Slavonic texts may have in medieval Slavic cultures. As a result, the boundaries between verbal, musical and visual art become relatively unimportant, and the system of Church Slavonic literature is in large part simultaneously the system of Church Slavonic music, iconography, etc.

A Church Slavonic text generally has two different functions: (1) a liturgical function, specified in terms of the discrete liturgical occasions on which it is read or sung, and (2) a canonical function, specified in terms of the continuum between orthodoxy and heresy. Each Church Slavonic text generally has a specific liturgical value and a specific canonical value, and these two kinds of values taken together serve to organize almost the entire corpus of Church Slavonic texts into a system of remarkable complexity.

The liturgical value of a Church Slavonic text is usually given in its title or rubric (at least in the manuscripts and black-letter church books); only a few texts have no liturgical value. The canonical value of a Church Slavonic text is determined by a variety of criteria, e.g., its liturgical use, the holiness or hierarchical status of its author, and its inclusion in lists of orthodox and heretical books (canons of Scripture, indices of apocrypha).

Because of the complexity of the Orthodox liturgical calendar, where four distinct temporal cycles are coordinated in a rhythmic pattern

which repeats itself every 532 years, Church Slavonic texts occur together in elaborate, ever varying combinations as they are presented over and over in the course of Orthodox worship. Because of this, most Church Slavonic texts have been designed to "nest" inside one another in a variety of ways, and compositions of individual writers may also exhibit this "nested" character (on occasion even incorporating compositions by earlier writers. The effect is much like that of an Orthodox church building, in which any number of works of visual art (icons, etc.) by different hands are combined into a whole that is much more than the sum of its parts.

Church Slavonic literature has had this systematic character from its very beginning. It is primarily a literature of translation, and its translators selected mostly Greek and Latin texts of liturgical importance or of high canonical authority, with the result that such texts form a much greater part of the whole than was the case in the original Greek and Latin literatures. The effect of such texts was, so to speak, "diluted" in Greek or Latin literature by a large number of pre-Christian compositions as well as many Christian works composed according to pre-Christian conventions of literary form and technique. In Church Slavonic literature, however, the effect of texts with canonical and especially liturgical value was "concentrated" by the translators' selection, so that its peculiar character as a system was based on liturgical and canonical values, rather than on artistic ones.

Because of its dominant role, Church Slavonic literature merits the serious attention of every student of the medieval literature of one or another Orthodox Slavic people (including Ukrainian medieval literature). Because of its peculiar character as a system, it also merits the serious attention of specialists in general literary theory.

IV. Discussion:

The discussion that followed Prof. Mathiesen's presentation focused in considerable detail on the particular issues raised in the paper. Dr. Struminsky asked if the linguistic axis of Prof. Mathiesen's graphic depiction of the system could also be correlated with a chronological axis. The speaker replied that essentially the depiction was synchronic and as such was not intended to embrace diachronic issues. He agreed, however,

that chronology was a concern in the understanding of the three languages, Church Slavonic, Hybrid, and Vernacular, and that Hybrid was the most posterior. Furthermore, he noted, functions were not constant through time. Prof. Rudnyckyj next asked how the speaker would classify Macedonian. Prof. Mathiesen placed Macedonian together with Bulgarian and Serbian, not as a separate variety of Church Slavonic. A follow-up question led the participants to discuss the enormous influence and importance of Miletij Smotryc'kyj.

Prof. Sysyn inquired whether the middle or Hybrid language was perceived as such by the people who used it or if this was an anachronistic description. Prof. Picchio pressed the question a step further, arguing that the very notion of a hybrid language was not useful, since relativity could be established anywhere and since the vernacular was not a written language. The speaker responded by noting that his linguistic categories represented three languages, not three styles, and that the lowest of these corresponded to the one used in legal documents. Prof. Ronen then pointed out that the ideas about literature as a system that the speaker had ascribed to Wellek and Warren were originally expressed by Jakobson and Tynjanov, who applied the term "literariness" to them.

Prof. Grabowicz remarked that while the speaker had said that the concept of a literary system built on function disappeared after the Renaissance, nineteenth-century Ukrainian literature still shows many characteristics of such a system. Mr. Kasinec, returning to an earlier comment by the speaker, noted that there is a community of Old Believers in Oregon who have preserved many old texts and who subscribe to the functional value of texts. The discussion ended with Prof. Pritsak's comments about the similarities between the speaker's three language system and the Turkic-Arabic-Persian language system in the Ottoman empire.

V. Selected Bibliography:

A. Literary studies.

Birnbaum, H. "Toward a Comparative Study of Church Slavonic Literature." In his *On Medieval and Renaissance Slavic Writing*, Slavistic Printings and Reprintings, 266 (1974). Pp. 13-40.

Lixačev, D. S. "Drevneslavjanskie literatury kak sistema." In *Slavjanskie literatury: VI Mezdunarodnyj s"ezd slavistov, Doklady Sovetskoj*

delegacii, Moscow, 1968. Pp. 5-48.

_____. Fuller version: "Staroslavjanskite literaturi kato sistema." *Literaturna misəl* 13 (1969): 1, 3-38. *Poètika drevnerusskoj literatury*. Leningrad, 1971.

Mathiesen, R. "Nòta sul gènere acatistico è sulla lètteratura agiografica slava ecclesiastica nel XIV e XV sécolo." *Ricerche Slavistiche* 13 (1965): 57-63.

_____. "A Textological Note on the Works of Vladimir Monomach." *Ricerche Slavistiche* 16 (1968/69): 112-25. [Russian translation: "Tekstologičeskie zamečanija o proizvedenijax Vladimira Monomaxa." *Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoj literatury* 26 (1971): 192-201.

_____, with D. De Palma, M. Farrall, W. Leavy, and S. McCarthy. "Cyril of Turov's 'Prayers after the Hours': A New Edition." *Papers in Slavic Philology* 3 (1979).

Naumow, A. E. "Literatura cerkiewnosłowiańska a omparatystyka literacka." *Slavia* 42 (1973): 149-56.

_____. *Apokryfy w systemie literatury cerkiewnosłowiańskiej*. Prace Komisji słowianoznawstwa, 36. Cracow (Polska Akademia Nauk), 1976.

Picchio, R. "O cerkiewno-słowiańskiej wspólnocie kulturalnojęzykowej." *Sprawozdania z posiedzeń komisji* (Polska Akademia Nauk, Cracow), 1962, pp. 449-54.

_____. "A proposito della Slavia Ortodossa e della comunità linguistica slava ecclesiastica." *Ricerche Slavistiche* 11 (1963): 105-27.

_____. "Slave ecclésiastique, slavons et rédactions." In *To Honor Roman Jakobson*, Janua linguarum, Series maior 31-33 [1967]. Pp. 1527-44.

_____. "Models and Patterns in the Literary Tradition of Medieval Orthodox Slavdom." In *American Contributions to the Seventh International Congress of Slavists*, The Hague and Paris, 1973. Vol. 2, pp. 439-67.

Spasskij, F. G. *Russkoe liturgičeskoe tvorčestvo (po sovremennym Minejam)*. Paris, 1951.

B. Manuals.

Nikol'skij, K. *Posobie k izučeniju ustava Bogosluženija Pravoslavnoj Cerkvi*. St. Petersburg, 1900 (reprinted Graz, 1960).

Trifunović, Đorđe. *Azbučnik srpskih srednjovekovnih književnih pojmova*. Belgrade, 1974.

MINUTES of the SEMINAR in UKRAINIAN STUDIES held at Harvard University

during the Academic Year 1978 — 1979

Cambridge, Massachusetts
1978 — 1979
Number IX